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ABSTRACT

Empirical knowledge of coping usage and coping effectiveness has lagged behind popular interest. To examine the effectiveness of specific coping efforts in a single role area--parenting--panel data from a large metropolitan population were examined. The same coping efforts were assessed using two criteria of effectiveness: the extent to which they reduced felt stress at the same time point, and the extent to which they reduced role problems over time. Using unstructured interview problems, coping efforts and role distress were assessed in a population of 292 Chicago parents with children at home over 5 years of age. Major coping factors identified were: (1) attempts at discipline and punishment; (2) optimistic comparisons of one's situation relative to the past and peers; (3) attention to positive aspects of the situation; and (4) conscious restriction of feelings of parental responsibility and resignation to parental problems. Data analyses showed that only optimistic comparisons correlated with fewer problems and less distress. The pattern of findings pointed to the importance of family composition: those with smaller families and older children had fewer problems and were more apt to select effective coping strategies and reduce problems over time. The apparent spiral of problems and distress that these findings suggest highlights the need for research on more effective coping strategies for parents. (JAC)

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Coping with Parental Problems: Issues in Judging Effectiveness

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Coping with Parental Problems:

Issues in Judging Effectiveness

Like stress before it, "coping" is rapidly becoming an enormously popular and increasingly ambiguous concept in a wide variety of disciplines. There are increasing efforts to describe and assess coping efforts, styles, and resources; to identify their precursors and correlates; and to recommend intervention techniques to "help people cope" with the stressors they encounter. Yet empirical knowledge, as well as conceptualization, of both coping usage and coping effectiveness lags behind popular interest.

Part of the apparent incoherence of findings in the coping literature results from the differing kinds of questions which researchers on coping have posed. Some research has focused on very broad and basic coping resources, defined as generalized attitudes and skills which are considered advantageous when dealing with all sorts of difficulty. Other researchers have focused on more specific styles of coping, usually defined as typical or habitual preferences of ways of approaching problems. Such coping style typologies, by definition, assume some cross-situational, relatively stable problem-solving tendencies in individuals. Other coping researchers have focused instead on specific coping efforts--behavioral or intrapsychic actions taken in specific situations which are aimed at reducing a given problem or strain.

Whether the focus is on basic coping resources, relatively general coping styles, or specific coping efforts, some claims are ordinarily made about their relative helpfulness or effectiveness in dealing with situations or events. Some use theoretical criteria to identify more or less adequate, mature or appropriate coping efforts. For example, Haan (1977)

categorizes ego processes as adaptive or maladaptive depending on their flexibility, future-orientation, relative freedom from reality-distortion, complexity, allowance for gratification of impulses, and expression of affect. Antonovsky (1979) also proposes criteria for evaluating the overall maturity of coping styles; he stresses flexibility, defined as creating contingent plans and tactics and being willing to consider them; farsightedness, anticipation of the long-range as well as immediate responses to actions envisaged; and rationality, seen as accuracy and objectivity of appraisal. This clearly overlaps with Haan's typology, and with Buehler and Hogan's (1980) dimensions of long-range/short-range orientations and comprehensive versus piecemeal approach to problems.

These theoretical preferences for some styles over others, however, demand greater empirical evidence of utility or effectiveness. But what criteria are appropriate to judge whether a given coping style or effort is "effective"? Should we consider reduction in the individual's subjective distress when faced with problems, as Pearlin and Schooler (1978) have done? Or should we focus on the well-being of others affected by the situation, such as spouses, co-workers, or children, as McCubbin et al. (1976) have done? Our choices may powerfully govern our declarations of effectiveness: for example, Stern and Pascale (1979) found that heart attack patients who denied the seriousness of their illness were overtly less anxious and depressed, and more likely to carry out their usual role responsibilities; but their wives were more prone to depression.

Beyond reducing the distress feeling of ourselves or involved others, we also ordinarily entertain the hope that "coping" with a problem or difficulty may actually alleviate or remove the stressful situation. Assessing

problem reduction, however, is often impossible in cross-sectional studies; efficacy in this sense may only become apparent if we have some longer-range assessment of later problem level.

Little evidence has accrued regarding either the short-term or long-range utility of coping variables, whether as judged by reductions in emotional distress or reductions in problems. Many apparent discussions of "effectiveness" have actually relied on the respondents' claims that this or that strategy or approach was helpful to them in some way (see for example, McCubbin, 1976; Berman and Turk, 1981). Such testimonials, needless to say, stand in an uncertain relationship to observed effects (Horowitz, 1978; Menaghan, 1982). Other studies (e.g., Pearlin and Schooler, 1978) have been limited to cross-sectional, simultaneous assessments of problems, coping efforts, and distress. Thus, the extent to which coping resources, styles, and efforts actually reduce problems over time demands further investigation.

As Folkman and Lazarus (1980) argue, coping choices seem more likely to be problem-specific than problem-invariant; thus, generalized coping styles may not fully capture the varying strategies people employ in dealing with specific problems. The present study, therefore, is focused on specific coping efforts in a single role area, parenting. The choice of the parental area has several advantages for exploring coping effectiveness. First, previous studies (Pearlin and Schooler, 1978) had found that role-related distress in marriage and parenting was more responsive to coping efforts than was distress in occupational and economic areas. Thus, it seems a reasonable arena in which to examine effectiveness in problem reduction as well. Second, a variety of studies (e.g., Campbell, Converse

and Rodgers, 1976) have suggested that family problems, and the feelings of distress associated with them, are critical contributors to more pervasive feelings of depression and dissatisfaction. The identification of coping efforts which might reduce parental problems, then, has important potential for general well-being.

The present study, then, utilizes panel data from a large metropolitan population to examine the effectiveness of specific coping efforts in a single role area, parenting. The same coping efforts are assessed using two different criteria of effectiveness: the extent to which they reduce felt distress at the same time point, and the extent tow hich they reduce role problems over time. While limited to a single role area, this analysis offers some estimates of the varying effects which coping efforts may have in individual lives.

METHOD

Study Population

Data for the findings to be discussed here are derived from a panel study of 1106 Chicago-area adults aged 22-69, interviewed in 1972 and 1976. Samples and procedures for the larger study, focused on social stresses in everyday life, life events, and adaptation, are described in detail elsewhere (Pearlin and Schooler, 1978; Pearlin, Lieberman, Menaghan and Mullan, 1981). The 1972 interview includes measures of self-esteem, sense of mastery, and psychological adaptations; sources of difficulty and emotional distress associated with marital, parental, occupational, homemaking, and economic roles; reports of coping strategies used in each of these areas; neighborhood and friendship involvements; and physical health. Identical measures of role-related difficulties and dissatisfactions, coping

strategies, and overall psychological adaptation were included in the Time Two (1976) survey. In addition, the interview ascertained whether any of twenty-five possible transitions or other life events had occurred in the time between interviews. In this analysis, the study population is restricted to the 292 married parents who had children five years of age or older living at home, who had not experienced changes in their household composition through births, children's departures, or the loss of a spouse.[1]

Measurement of Major Variables

Problems, coping efforts, and role distress are assessed by a series of items originally developed through unstructured interviews in which respondents were asked about the problems they faced and the efforts they made to deal with them. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were used to identify discrete dimensions of problems and coping efforts, to assess the extent of correlated measurement errors when identical items were asked of the same people over time, and to test the stability of factor structure over the two time points. A modified version of Joreskog and Sorbom's maximum-likelihood structural equation program (LISREL) was used to derive the factors and establish stability, and to generate Bartlett factor weights which could be used to assign factor scores.[2] Appendix A details the resulting factors, and lists the unstandardized regression weights of each item on its factors.

Coping Efforts. Four major coping factors were identified:

1) attempts at discipline and punishment;
2) optimistic comparisons of one's situation relative to the past and relative to one's peers;

3) selective inattention to unpleasant aspects and heightened attention to positive features of the situation;

4) a conscious restriction of feelings of parental responsibility and resignation to parental problems.

The first of these is the only effort focused on direct modification of the problems. The second and third seem aimed at deflecting or buffering the stressful impact of problems by modifying perceptions of the problems; and the fourth is focused on managing or controlling the unpleasant feelings that may be aroused by the problem.

The latter two functions, of course, are reminiscent of Haan's (1977) attention focusing and affect regulation; and the functions also echo Folkman and Lazarus's (1980) categorizations of problem-solving behaviors, problem-solving intrapsychic action, emotion-managing behavior, and emotion-managing intrapsychic action.

Parental Problems. Several aspects of parental problems were queried about in the initial interviews: problems with everyday parent-child interaction (disrespect, disobedience, advice and guidance being ignored) and everyday behavior (poor school work, poor use of time, careless appearance, misbehavior, conflict with child's peers, or parental disapproval about child's choice of friends); and more global concerns (asked only if some children were at least sixteen) concerning the children's apparent future prospects (the extent of future-oriented effort, likelihood of misuse of drugs or alcohol and extent of commitment to religious and moral beliefs, likelihood of success). For this analysis, only the more specific behavioral items were considered. These formed a single factor, here labeled simply parental problems.

Parental Distress. Ongoing distress was assessed by a series of items asking for the feelings generated by a global consideration of the parental role--e.g., how frustrated, unhappy, unsure, successful, or tense one felt when thinking of all the good and bad things about being a parent.

Demographic Variables. Included were: gender, Hollingshead's categorization of husband's occupational prestige, family income, number of children in the family, average age of children in the family, and level of marital problems.[3]

The variables of family income and husbands' occupational prestige (both assessed at Time One), both indirectly assess socio-economic status. Since they are strongly correlated ($r = -.45$), assessing the impact of one while statistically controlling the other may give a misleadingly low estimate of the effect of SES. In the regression equations calculated here, they are assessed as a set.

To reduce skewness in several of the variables, non-linear transformations (logarithms and exponents) were applied.[4] Table 1 displays the basic statistics and intercorrelations of the variables considered in the analysis.

Table 1 about here

It is evident that the various coping efforts are not independent of one another, nor independent of levels of problem and distress. Both resignation and disciplinary efforts are positively correlated with selective ignoring, and both disciplinary efforts and selective ignoring are associated with greater problems and greater distress. Of the four coping efforts, only optimistic comparisons is correlated with fewer problems and less distress.

Coping efforts are also moderately associated with some of the contextual

variables. Women are more likely to use both selective ignoring and discipline than are men; those with larger families show greater usage of discipline and lesser use of optimistic comparisons; and those with older children show greater use of resignation and lesser usage of disciplinary efforts. These demographic variables, however, are also moderately related to the extent of parental problems and parental distress, with women, those in higher occupational prestige categories, those with more marital problems, and those with younger children reporting greater problems.

The simultaneous consideration of these variables in multivariate regression equations is necessary to disentangle the independent effects of these variables.

The Analytic Model

As other researchers (e.g., Ekehammar, 1974; Hill, 1949) have argued, it is reasonable to expect the final outcomes of coping processes to be influenced both by the characteristics of the situation to which people are responding and by the actual coping efforts they make. Yet conceptualizing the relationship between role problems, role distress, and coping raises several knotty issues. At any given point in time, problems, distress, and coping variables are all correlated. Does the association of optimistic comparisons with less distress, for example, suggest that they reduce distress or suggest that people with fewer problems are more able to view their parenting in positive terms? In short, net of their association with fewer parental problems, do such coping efforts really reduce distress? If we control for level of problems, however, we are ignoring the possibility that fewer problems at any point in time may reflect the effectiveness of past coping in reducing problems. If we insist that coping be assessed net of such impact, we run the risk of underestimating

its effectiveness.

In this analysis, current coping is considered to be a response to current strain. The impact of coping in reducing strain, on the other hand, is assumed to take some time to occur. Thus, the impact of strain on coping, and of coping on stress, is immediate, while the impact of coping on strain is assumed to be lagged.

Figure 1 depicts the basic model underlying this analysis. Within any time point, the situational context (one's gender, social class, family income, family size, average child age, and ongoing marital problems) influences one's parental problems (path a); and the level of problems, as well as the situational context, influences one's choice of coping efforts (paths b, c). Such coping efforts reduce felt distress at the time (path e). The extent of reduction may be conditioned by the situational context and the level of strains; and these may also have direct effects (paths d, f).

Figure 1 about here

Across time, coping is expected to reduce later problems (path g), even when prior problems, prior distress and prior situational characteristics are controlled (paths h, i, j). In turn, later parental problems may themselves shape differing coping strategies at later time points; and these altered strategies may influence later distress; but exploring such changes in coping over time, and such consequent changes in distress, are not tasks of the present analysis.

FINDINGS

The analytic model views ongoing role problems as influencing coping efforts; coping efforts, in turn, may alter later role problems as well as reduce current distress. To explore this model, multiple regression equations were calculated for each of the dependent variables: initial role problems (Table 2), initial coping efforts (Table 3), initial distress (Table 4) and subsequent role problems (Table 5).

Each table displays the unstandardized coefficients, standardized beta coefficients, and the squared semi-partial correlation coefficient (sr^2), which represents the proportion of variance explained by each variable or variable set, net of that explained by all other variables in the equation at the same time.

Table 2 about here

Initial Role Problems. As Table 2 shows, the situational context variables explain about 12 percent of the variance in initial problem level, indicating that many other factors outside this model are shaping the level of parental difficulty at any given point in time. Net of the other variables, initial role problems were higher for women and for those with greater marital problems. They also varied with family composition, being higher for those with younger children and for those with larger families. Socioeconomic status, as indicated by the variable set income and occupational prestige, was not significantly related to initial problem level.

Table 3 about here

Parental Coping Efforts. Table 3 displays the regression of all four coping efforts on the situational context variables and initial problem level.

Two equations are shown for each coping effort: first before controlling for initial problem level, and second with initial problem level controlled.

For three of the four coping variables, the level of current parental problems was strongly predictive: parents with relatively few problems were more apt to view their situation optimistically, less prone to selectively ignore their discontents, and less likely to make disciplinary efforts.

With level of problems held constant, the contextual variables had some direct effects: disciplinary efforts were more common for female parents and for those with younger children and a larger total family size. Optimistic comparisons were also more extensively used by mothers than by fathers, but less often used as family size increased. The use of selective ignoring was unaffected by aspects of family composition, sex, and SES, but increased when parents were also faced with greater marital problems. Finally, taking a resigned attitude, with its implied restriction of parental potency, increased as the average age of one's children became older.

Reducing Felt Distress. Table 4 shows a series of regression equations detailing the linkage between coping efforts and felt distress. Column 1 shows the impact of the four coping variables, accounting for fourteen percent of the variance, before problems or situations are controlled. All coping efforts but resignation significantly influenced role distress net of one another, with optimistic comparisons reducing it but selective ignoring and disciplinary efforts exacerbating distress. As column 2 of Table 4 shows, these associations are not entirely accounted for by their association with marital strain: when this is

statistically held constant, both discipline and comparisons continue to exert an impact. Together, role problems and coping efforts explain about 25 percent of the variance in marital distress. For any level of problems, it appears, attempting to cope by disciplinary efforts, and viewing one's situation relatively pessimistically, is associated with heightened feelings of distress.

The final column of Table 4 includes the situational context variables. With initial parental problem level and coping efforts held constant, women and respondents who are also reporting greater marital problems experience more parental distress. The situational variables increase explained variance by about 8 percent; and the earlier links between context and both problem level and coping efforts (Tables 2 and 3) point to their indirect impact on feelings of parental distress.

Table 4 about here

Reducing Later Role Problems. While these parental coping efforts may reduce one's distress, this does not necessarily imply that they are helpful in altering the problems themselves. The panel data permits this issue to be addressed.

Table 5 displays the relevant regression equations. The four columns show the effects of sequentially adding distress, coping efforts, problem level, and the contextual variables to the equation. With Time One distress held constant, only disciplinary efforts significantly affected later problems, and this was also true when initial problem level was controlled (column 3): for any level of initial problem and distress, greater use of discipline was associated with greater problems at Time Two.

The situational variables (column 4) explain an additional 10 percent

of variance. Most powerful are the variables indicating family composition: problems have decreased for those with a smaller number of children and with children with an older average age. Net of these effects no coping effort significantly influences later problems. Neither sex, socio-economic status, nor initial marital problems has any direct impact on later problems. Thus, the only impact of coping on later problem level is indirect, through the reduction of distress through optimistic comparisons and less discipline.

In summary, the analyses suggest that discipline and optimistic comparisons play a direct role in affecting ongoing feelings of distress, but have little direct impact on either the resolution or exacerbation of the problems themselves over time. Neither selective ignoring and resignation, despite their origin as subjectively helpful responses to parental problems, has any significant impact either on feelings of distress or on levels of problems.

DISCUSSION

These findings--the exacerbating role of discipline, the helpful role of optimistic comparisons, and the absence of effects for selective ignoring and resignation--point to the importance of empirical assessments of effectiveness: if we had relied on respondent's subjective assessments of helpfulness, we would have mistakenly concluded that all four parental coping efforts were effective. The findings also illustrate how one's conclusions about effectiveness depend on the criterion one uses. Had this analysis relied completely on reduction in problems to assess effectiveness, no coping effort would have been considered effective.

The pattern of findings point to the importance of family composition

in understanding both the problems parents face and the coping efforts they choose. This seems a situation where the rich get richer: those with smaller families and older children have fewer problems to begin with, are more apt to select coping strategies that are effective in reducing their distress, and evidence a greater reduction in problems over time. The negative impact of family size, it is important to note, is not an artifact of social class, for these effects hold when family income and occupational prestige levels are held constant.

The findings also suggest that the effectiveness of coping efforts is not role-invariant: in a parallel analysis of marital coping efforts (Menaghan, 1982b), both selective ignoring and resignation exacerbated feeling of distress, while in this analysis they had no effect; optimistic comparisons in marriage was associated with fewer later problems as well as less ongoing distress; and the marital direct-action effort, negotiation, was associated with fewer later problems (in contrast to the parental direct-action of discipline which if anything worsened later problems). Before making general conclusions about coping effectiveness, it is clear that we need to expand our criteria for effectiveness, our choice of roles, and our set of specific coping efforts.

Obviously, this analysis has not included all possible coping efforts that parents try in response to the problems their children pose. We cannot, for example, conclude anything about the effectiveness of physical force, parent-child negotiation, or environmental restructuring. Within the restricted range of coping efforts that recurrently emerged from open-ended interviews with parents, however, we can conclude that the effectiveness of common parental efforts is rather limited; and that those parents whose family composition makes them especially prone to problems are those

whose coping choices tend to exacerbate their problems. The apparent spiral of problems and distress that these findings suggest point to the need for greater research on purportedly more effective coping strategies for parents, and greater communication to parents of the ineffectiveness, or even counter-productiveness, of popular parental approaches.

Figure 1. Parental Coping Usage and Effectiveness: Analytic Model

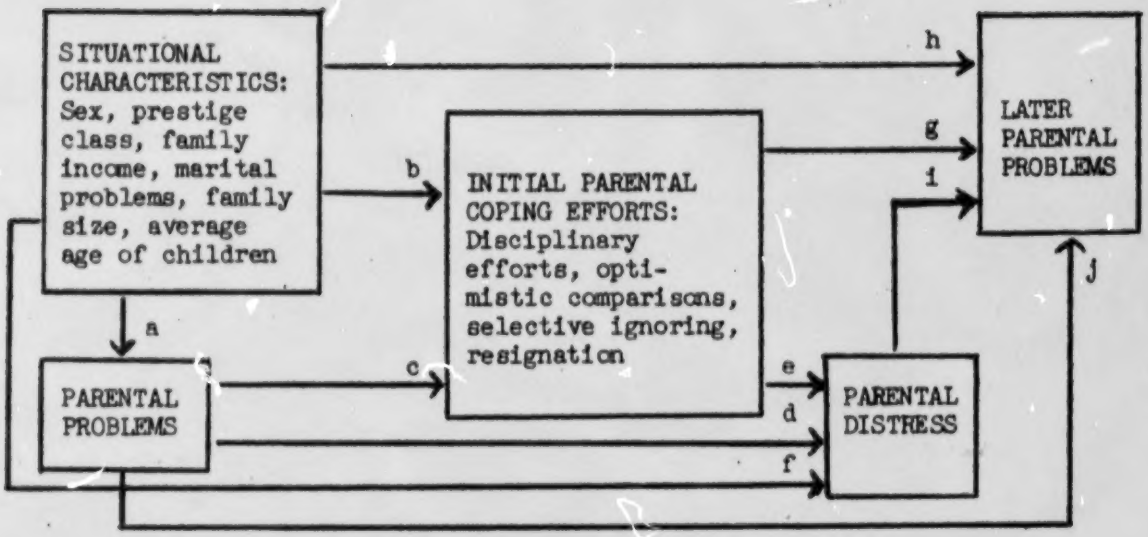

Table 1. Basic Statistics and Correlations

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1 Sex	100[a]												
2 Occupational Prestige	04	100											
3 Family Income	10	-45	100										
4 Marital Problems	-15	02	-10	100									
5 Number of Children	-01	15	-21	-02	100								
6 Average Child Age	10	09	-13	02	27	100							
7 Initial Problems	-16	-15	07	23	09	-10	100						
8 Initial Discipline	-19	-01	-02	03	14	-24	32	100					
9 Initial Comparisons	-10	12	-10	-01	-11	-02	-18	-09	100				
10 Initial Ignoring	-12	-15	03	19	-01	-05	24	23	-02	100			
11 Initial Resignation	-01	03	-08	10	09	33	-04	-05	-05	22	100		
12 Initial Parental Distress	-18	-12	-01	33	01	-01	45	26	-25	18	06	100	
13 Later Parental Problems	-11	-13	11	14	09	-33	41	28	-09	13	-07	29	100
Mean	.45	3.86	8.89	23.83	3.24	11.39	9.76	2.44	3.55	9.74	1.11	9.32	9.76
Standard Deviation	.50	1.67	0.63	2.81	1.46	5.45	0.20	.73	1.08	0.25	0.37	.35	.20
N	292	290	291	287	292	292	292	292	292	289	284	292	292

[a]Leading decimals are omitted. For N of 292, correlations of . or larger are significant at the P < .05 level.

Table 2. The Impact of Situational Context on Initial Parental Problems: Regression Analysis

Independent Variables	B	Beta	Sr^2
Sex	- .044*	- .111*	.012*
Occupational Prestige	- .015	- .129	.027**
Income	.020	.064	
Marital Problems	.016**	.224**	.049**
Number of Children	.021**	.156**	.022**
Average Age of Children	- .004**	- .119**	.013**
Intercept	9.262		
R^2 =			.118

* P < .10

** P < .05

Table 3. The Impact of Situational Context and Initial Parental Problems on Specific Parental Coping Efforts.

(a) DISCIPLINARY EFFORTS

Variables	(1) B	(1) Beta	(1) sr^2	(2) B	(2) Beta	(2) sr^2
Situational Context:			.126			.091**
Sex	-.232**	-.158**	.024	-.188**	-.128**	.015**
Occupational Prestige	-.002	-.004	.000	.014	.031	.001
Family Income	.011	.010		-.009	-.001	
Marital Problems	.004	.013	.000	-.012	-.047	.002
Number of Children	.109**	.218**	.042**	.088**	.176**	.027**
Average Age of Children	-.037**	-.277**	.070**	-.033**	-.244**	.056**
Initial Problems				.993*	.270**	.064**
Intercept	2.439			-6.754		
R^2			.126			.190

(b) OPTIMISTIC COMPARISONS

Variables	(1) B	(1) Beta	(1) sr^2	(2) B	(2) Beta	(2) sr^2
Situational Variables:			.047			.041*
Sex	-.234*	-.108*	.011*	-.274**	-.127**	.015**
Occupational Prestige	.070	.109	.022**	.056	.087	.014
Family Income	-.119	-.069		-.100	-.058	
Marital Problems	-.014	-.036	.000	.001	.002	.000
Number of Children	-.110**	-.148**	.020**	-.090*	-.122*	.013
Average Age of Children	.003	.016	.000	-.001	-.005	.000
Initial Problems				-.919**	-.169**	.025**
Intercept	5.086			13.599		
R^2			.047			.072

(c) SELECTIVE IGNORING

Variables	(1) B	(1) Beta	(1) sr^2	(2) B	(2) Beta	(2) sr^2
Situational Context:			.069			.040*
Sex	-.041	-.082	.006	-.031	-.063	.004
Occupational Prestige	-.022	-.147	.020*	-.018	-.124	.013
Family Income	-.002	-.006		-.007	-.017	
Marital Problems	.016	.185	.033**	.013**	.146**	.019**
Number of Children	.004	.021	.000	-.001	-.007	.000
Average Age of Children	-.002	-.043	.002	-.000	-.022	.000
Initial Problems				.218	.176	.027**
Intercept	9.490			7.473		
R^2			.069			.096

Table 3 continued

(d) RESIGNATION

Variables	(1) B	(1) Beta	(1) sr^2	(2) B	(2) Beta	(2) sr^2
Situational Context:			.119			.118**
Sex	-.022	-.029	.000	-.024	-.033	.001
Occupational Prestige	-.003	-.013	.001	-.004	-.017	.001
Family Income	-.019	-.032		-.017	-.030	
Marital Problems	.011	.082	.007	.012	.089	.007
Number of Children	-.001	-.006	.000	-.001	-.005	.000
Average Age of Children	.022**	.330**	.099**	.022**	.326**	.095**
Initial Problems				-.061	-.033	.001
Intercept	.793			1.357		
R^2			.119			.120

* P < .10
** P < .05

Table 4. The Impact of Situational Context, Initial Problems, and Coping Efforts on Parental Distress

Variables	(1) B	(1) Beta	(1) sr^2	(2) B	(2) Beta	(2) sr^2	(3) B	(3) Beta	(3) sr^2
Coping:			.136**			.053**			.058**
Discipline	.102**	.215**		.058**	.121**		.072**	.151**	
Comparison	-.074**	-.229**		-.056**	-.172**		-.063**	-.196**	
Ignoring	.163*	.115*		.062	.044		-.005	-.003	
Resignation	.036	.038		.063	.067		.033	.035	
Initial Problems				.647	.369	.115**	.538**	.307**	.074**
Situation:									.075**
Sex							-.066*	-.095*	.008*
Occupational Prestige							-.015	-.073	.004
Family Income							-.027	-.049	
Marital Problems							.028**	.228**	.046**
Number of Children							-.020	-.083	.006
Average Age of Children							.004	.069	.004
Intercept	7.699			2.382			3.802		
R^2			.136			.251			.326

* p .10
**p .05

Table 5. The Impact of Situational Context, Initial Problems, Coping Efforts, and Distress on Later Parental Problems

Variables	(1) B	(1) Beta	(1) sr^2	(2) B	(2) Beta	(2) sr^2	(3) B	(3) Beta	(3) sr^2	(4) B	(4) Beta	(4) sr^2
Initial Distress	.168**	.291**	.085**	.132**	.229**	.046**	.070*	.122*	.011*	.080**	.139**	.013**
Initial Coping						.055**			.026*			.006
Discipline				.056**	.205**		.042**	.152**		.020	.074	
Comparisons				-.002	-.013		.001	.008		.006	.030	
Ignoring				.049	.060		.012	.015		-.013	-.015	
Resignation				-.048	-.088		-.033	-.061		.020	.036	
Initial Problems							.302**	.299**	.065**	.262**	.259**	.047**
Situation:												.098**
Sex										.004	.010	.000
Occupational Prestige										-.005	-.039	.009
Family Income										.025	.077	
Marital Problems										.004	.055	.003
Number of Children										.023**	.168**	.023**
Average Age of Children										-.012**	-.329**	.081**
Intercept	8.193			7.970						6.248		
R^2			.085			.140			.205			.303

* p .10
**p .05

FOOTNOTES

[1]Of the 915 respondents who were parents at Time One, 453 had at least one child over age four who was living at home. These were asked the series of parental strain questions analyzed here. Respondents who had had additional children born (N = 45), had had older children move away (N = 61), or had altered their marital status (N = 15) between the two interviews, were excluded, in order to reduce ambiguity in the meaning of changes in reported problems from Time One to Time Two. Only twelve percent (N = 40) of the remaining respondents were not currently married; in particular, only 2.2 percent of fathers were not currently married. Since this group was so small, and since marital status was expected to influence parental problems and parental coping, these were also excluded. Thus, the study population considered here consists of the 332 married parents who had children five or older living in their households who experienced no change in their household size.

[2]In longitudinal studies, asking identical questions of the same respondents at two or more time points increases the likelihood of correlated errors. Statistical procedures in the maximum likelihood confirmatory factor analysis programs developed by Joreskog (Joreskog, 1969; Joreskog and Van Thillo, 1972) permit estimation of the extent of such correlated errors. They also permit researchers to test explicitly the invariance of factor structures at multiple time points. In no case was there a significant improvement in fit when models that permitted factor loadings to vary over time were compared with models that constrained the factor loadings to be equal; this increases confidence that the relationship between our constructs and indicators has remained stable over time.

Appendix A shows the exact wording of items used, and the unstandardized regression weights of each item on its factors (indicating the extent to

which item variance can be attributed to the factor rather than to error). The program also generates Bartlett factor weights (Lawley & Maxwell, 1971), which can be used to construct factor scores. As Appendix A shows, the correlations between the factor scores and the concepts are fairly strong (average concept-factor correlation for the set of variables is .86), indicating adequate reliability of the factor scores. The regression analyses reported here used ordinary least squares regression with the constructed factor scores.

[3]Level of marital problems was assessed as a composite of three aspects of marriage: a) the sense of perceived justice or equity, or the balance between what the respondent feels they give to the relationship and what they obtain; b) the emotional distance between spouses, tapping issues of the spouse's perceived love, affection, and appreciation; and c) lack of growth possibilities in the relationship, tapping the extent to which the spouse is seen as enhancing the respondent's freedom to be the kind of person they wish to be.

Number of children in the family ranged from 1 to 14 children. Six scale points were used: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 or more.

[4]Specifically, parental problems, parental distress, selective ignoring, family income and marital problems were skewed right. These variables were first linearly recoded so that their values ranged between 0 and 1, and then natural logarithms variables were taken. This procedure follows Hartwig and Dearing, 1979.

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Appendix A. Measures of Parental Coping Efforts, Parental Problems, and Parental Distress.

	Lambda Values
1. Disciplinary Efforts	
a) How often do you scold your child(ren)?	1.00
b) How often do you take away a privilege?	1.03
c) How often do you threaten some kind of punishment?	.98
Avg. concept/factor correlation = .90 x^2/d.f. = 2.0	
2. Optimistic Comparisons	
a) As time goes by, has being a parent generally become much easier for you, somewhat easier, has it stayed about the same, become somewhat more difficult, or much more difficult?	1.00
b) What about as you look into the future? Would you guess that in the next year or so being a parent will generally become easier for you, stay about the same, or become more difficult?	.38
c) How much would you compare yourself with other parents having children about the same ages as yours? (Fewer problems/about the same/more problems)	.16
Avg. concept/factor correlation = .83 x^2/d.f. = 2.3	
3. Selective Ignoring	
a) How often do you just try to ignore what's going on?	1.00
b) How often do you remind yourself that things could be worse?	1.08
c) How often do you think that it's behavior that they will just outgrow?	1.08

	Lambda Values
d) How often do you tell yourself it is not really important?	1.07
e) How often do you try to notice only the good things?	1.19

Avg. concept/factor correlation = .82 x^2/d.f. = 1.6

4. Parental Resignation

a) How often do you decide there's really nothing you can do to change things?	1.00
b) The way my child(ren) (is/are) turning out depends on their inner nature and there is little I can do about it.	2.00
c) There is only so much I can do as a parent, and after that I just accept my child(ren) as (he/she/they) (is/are).	1.90

Avg. concept/factor correlation = .77 x^2/d.f. = 2.1

5. Parental Problems

a) How often are you treated without proper respect?	1.00
b) How often are your advice and guidance ignored?	.83
c) How often are you disobeyed?	.81
As a parent, how often do you have to give some attention to the correction of:	
d) misbehavior in the house?	1.05
e) your child(ren) having the wrong kinds of friends?	.85
f) your child(ren) failing to get along with others the same age?	.84
g) carelessness about personal appearance?	1.41
h) poor school work?	1.23
i) poor use of spare time?	1.42

Lambda Values

Avg. concept/factor correlation = .90 x^2/d.f. = 3.1

6. Parental Distress

Think now of your experiences as a parent -- all the daily pleasures and daily problems that you have. When you think of your experiences as a parent, . . .

a) how bothered or upset do you feel?	1.00
b) how worried do you feel?	1.01
c) how contented do you feel?	.65
d) how tense do you feel?	1.07
e) how frustrated do you feel?	1.09
f) how successful do you feel?	.49
g) how unhappy do you feel?	.90
h) how unsure of yourself do you feel?	.94
i) how emotionally worn out do you feel?	1.01

*Items c and f errors are correlated within time; items d and e errors are correlated within time.

Avg. concept/factor correlation = .94 x^2/d.f. = 2.53